

LETTER

FROM A

Weaver at *Norwich*,

TO A

MEMBER of Parliament

CONCERNING

The PRESENT STATE of our
WOOLLEN MANUFACTURES.

LONDON:

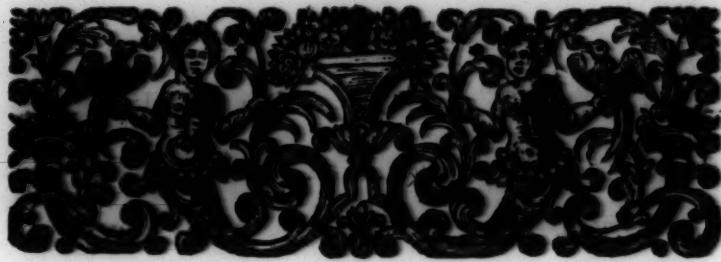
Printed for *J. Roberts* in *Warwick-Lane*.

[Price Six Pence.]

1785. 4

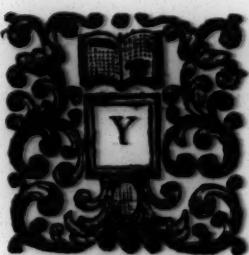
263... 1173





A
LETTER
FROM A
Weaver at *Norwich*,
TO A
MEMBER of Parliament.

SIR,

 YOU tell me the House
of Commons has ap-
pointed a Day for con-
sidering the State of
our *Woollen Manufactures*, and are
pleased to desire my Thoughts on
B the



the Subject, that you may be the better able, you say, to judge of the Expedients that are proposed for answering the People's Expectation, and remedying the Evil complained of. Alas ! Sir, the People's Expectation, if you mean the *Manufacturers*, is seldom under Consideration with the *Great*, or we should not have seen, in former Parliaments, so little Notice taken of the annual and numerous Petitions from these unhappy *Artizans*, nor St. Stephen's Chappel so often and so suddenly grown thin, at the bare Mention of *Wooll* or *Woollen-Manufactures*, as if some Contagion had been in the Sound.

WHEN I reflect on the *small* Regard had formerly to this important Subject, I must confess, I should despair

despair of ever seeing it taken into serious Consideration, did I not know the Merit and Ability of *most*, or *all*, of your present Members, and their Attachment to the real Interest of their Country, always inseparable from their own. Another Reason too, might induce me to hope for more certain Relief from your present Deliberations than formerly, if there were any the least Room to question the publick Spirit and Disinterestedness of the *present* House of Commons, is the approaching Elections, when the *Manufacturers of England* make no inconsiderable Figure; and I, who am one myself, and therefore may be supposed to know the Sentiments of my Brethren, can affirm, that they will endeavour to support the Interest of those who ef-

fectually support theirs. It is natural it should be so; for Gratitude ever follows, or ought to follow, a Benefit.

BEFORE I say any thing of the Decay of our *Woollen Manufacturers*, or give you my Thoughts of a Remedy, permit me, that have attended many former Parliaments, to point out to you, who are a young Member, some of the Impediments that had obstructed the Unanimity of the Legislature in this very Particular before us, that you may endeavour to avoid the like, in your Deliberations in a *succeeding* Parliament; for nothing of the Kind can be apprehended to happen in the *present*.

... of themselves have been
... to do. I do it to furnish **FIRST**,

... **SECOND**, & **THIRD**.

FIRST, then, The Member, or Members, moving for any Thing of this Nature, might have been obnoxious to some leading Men in the House, either on their own Account, or that of the Party they seemed to adhere to (for Parties have always subsisted since I can remember) or again on Account of the Part of the Kingdom they represented.

SECONDLY, Some considerable Members, or rather their Counties or Boroughs, were seemingly affected by some one of the Expedients proposed, and consequently opposed by them, however otherwise for the general Benefit of the whole Community.

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, That the Gentlemen that have had the arduous Load of the publick Administration on their Shoulders, may not have had Time to examine maturely an Affair of this Nature, and were therefore for deferring it, in Hopes of more Leisure: Add to this, that they may have imagined that the Consideration of a Matter of this Kind might be a Means of prolonging a Session they were inclined to shorten.

FOURTHLY, That some well-meaning Gentlemen may have apprehended a formidable Obstruction in the other House, from some Experience they might have had, and therefore were not for making

king Tryal till, what they thought
a proper Opportunity, offered.

AND Lastly, As a Law for this Purpose can never be effectual without giving some seeming Advantages to *Ireland*, by way of Encouragement to that People to bring us their *Wooll*, it was supposed there were some that would hear of nothing to favour her, from a weak and stupid Prepossession against that Nation ; not considering how interwoven, in many Respects, our own Interest is with hers.

THESE, Sir, are a few of those Reasons that had formerly withheld many *worthy* Members from going *heartily* and *sincerely* into Expedients for preventing the *present*

sent ruinous Condition of our Woollen Manufactures ; and, although, there is not the least Room for apprehending any thing of the Kind at present, I shall, however, for your Satisfaction, cursorily consider each of them apart.

To the First, I shall only say, that a publick Benefit is nevertheless so far being proposed by *this or that* Party, *this or that* Person, or by being petitioned for by *this or that* Shire or Corporation ; nor could the Opponents, for only this Reason, hope to avoid Censure, or being publickly stigmatized.

As to the Second, One would think it improbable, nay, almost impossible, the Representatives of the whole British Nation should be

be carried away, it may be said, deluded, by the Art and Cunning of a few *designing* Men, swayed only by the particular Interest of some favourite Corporation: But such Absurdities have been seen heretofore.

As to the Gentlemen in the Administration, mentioned in the third Place, they might not, indeed, have intended an Injury; but they should have considered, that deferring the Redress of an Evil, is little short of the Commission of one. A Bill of this Kind goes through the usual Forms in a very little Time, when Gentlemen are in earnest; the Sessions need not be prolonged one Day the more for it; and if it did, Gentlemen might think the Time well

spent in answering the Expecta-
tions of Millions of their *most use-
ful* Fellow-Subjects.

THOSE Gentlemen that would postpone so *general a Good* from the Fear of ill Success in the other House, should have done well to remember, That, as they had often altered their own Opinions of Things, upon Reflection, so it may be hoped, the noble *Not-Contents* may have also altered theirs ; but if it had happened otherwise, there was one ready Expedient for easing the Scruples of those our cautious Patriots ; that is, To have had a separate *Bill* for that Clause apprehended to meet with Difficulties in the other House.

As the Prepossession spoken of in the last Place relating to *Ireland*, notwithstanding the frequent Insinuations to that Purpose, I shall never believe that any Set of *English* Gentlemen could be so void of common Charity, and therefore I will not animadver on any Thing so highly improbable ; I shall only add, That I could mention many Laws, *designed* as a Restraint to *Ireland*, which have proved *real* Grievances to *this Nation* in the Consequence ; and, I doubt not, but Necessity, since nothing else can, will, one Day or other, oblige us to repeal all such Laws.

THE Matter now under your Consideration is, the Decay of our *Woolen Manufactures* ; an Evil

owing to various Causes, though perhaps more immediately to our own Supineness, than any other: But as the clandestine Exportation of *Wooll* from *England*, and of *Wooll* and *Woollen Manufactures* from *Ireland*, are those Causes at present complained of, I shall confine myself to them alone, and the rather, that they can be effectually removed, if proper Care and Attention be given by the Legislature.

I SHOULD hope, indeed, that the Laws already in Force, with some farther Encouragement to Informers, and proper Additions relating to Carriage, Package, and Goods imperfectly manufactured (which you'll find Part of your own Resolutions in 1730) would

go a great way towards preventing the Exportation of Wooll from this Part of Great Britain; for as to a Registry, I am apprehensive it will be found impracticable; but as to the illicit Exports from Ireland, I will own to you, that we in Trade were, and still are, of Opinion, that Lenity and Encouragements are rather to be used towards them than Compulsion. If it be true that the View of Gain seduces our own fellow Subjects at home to break through ~~all~~ our Laws, the severest that can well be imposed on a *free People*; what Benefit can be proposed from Laws, however rigidly framed, when to be executed by the very People whose Interest it will be to break through them? I should therefore be for giving that Nation every Encouragement

suggerent consistent with our own Interest. These, indeed, may be made temporary, that it may be seen if we shall be Gainers by the Experiment; I would by no means have the Essay delayed; for, I am sorry to say Delays, in this Particular, have brought all, or most, of our present Misfortunes upon us.

There are but two Ways, that I can see, to engage the Irish to sell to us, and to us alone, all the Wooll they can spare from their own Consumption, viz. By permitting them to send us their Wooll ~~free~~ ^{clear} of Duty, or by allowing them a certain Bounty on their ~~Raw~~ ^{Manufactured} Wooll, equal, or rather exceeding the Duty on their Turn. I should hope, from the natural Ingenuity of the Natives, they would therefore chuse

chuse the latter ; though I am for giving them the Alternative for our own Sakes.

ed that this Bill would be no ill.

It is to be hoped, the Concern some Gentlemen seemed to be under for our own Poor, if Irish Yarn was permitted Duty-free, is worn off by this Time, and that they are convinced (as all our own Wooll must necessarily be spun by ourselves) it can never hurt us; but, on the contrary, it will be of great Advantage to have the manufacturing of the Wooll of Ireland, tho' we receive it from them spun; They will naturally see that the Article of spinning is very trivial, if compared with the other Branches of the Manufacture: And I doubt not, but they will also consider, that we deprive Foreigners of

of so much Wooll and Yarn as we receive from *Ireland*; for, whatever exceeds their own Consumption at home, will, and must be always sold to Foreigners, or to us: It is obvious then, how we are to be determined in our Choice. *Ireland* is quite out of the Question; the Contest lies between us and Foreigners. If they can, with one hundred Weight of *Irish* Wooll, work up two of their own into such Stuffs as we were used to supply foreign Markets with; this alone, as it is an uncontraverted Matter of Fact, should induce us to use all Methods, try all Experiments, for preserving to us the Wooll of *Ireland*, *spun or unspun*.

THERE is Reason to hope, that the Encouragement proposed for *Ireland*,

Ireland, if timely given, will be a Means to put a Stop to the Exportation of *Woollen Manufactures* from thence: But to render it the more effectual; suppose his Majesty hath Power to shut up from Time to Time, any Port or Ports in that *Kingdom*, I mean only as to the Exportation of Wool. A Check of this Kind might induce the Magistrates and Inhabitants of such Ports to be more vigilant in the Execution of the *Wooll Laws*.

I SHOULD think it necessary to open more *Wooll Ports* in *England* and *Ireland* for the Conveniency of our own Manufacturers, and the Wooll-Growers there: *Exeter* for one, is the most convenient of any in this *Kingdom*, and *Galway* more contiguous to the Wooll-

D Grow-

Growers than any other Port in *Ireland*. The Objection I have heard made of the Proximity of these *Ports* to *France* is frivolous, if not rediculous ; for the Securities required by the Law now in Force (and more may be added, if thought necessary) must infallibly guard against any ill Consequences that can be apprehended from opening these Ports : If I do not forget, these Securities are five Times the Value of the Wooll or Yarn to be exported.

IT ought to be considered, that Land-Carriage of a gross Commodity, is always to be avoided, if possible ; but particularly in the present Case, where we alone are to pay for *that* in *Ireland*. I have seen a Computation of the Carriage

age and other incident Charges on Wooll from *Galway* to *Dublin* and *Cork*, and it amounted to no less than 12 per Cent.

I SHOULD think too, that opening the Port of *Galway* might be a Reason with the Inhabitants of *Cork* to be more cautious, for the future, how they transgres in the Exportation of Woollen Manufactures: It may be added, that as it will put the People of *Ireland* on a more equal Foot of Trade than they are at present, so it will be the Interest of the People about *Galway* to prevent any clandestine Exportation of Wooll from those Parts; for it must be observed, that the Want of convenient Markets often proves the Occasion of this illegal Commerce.

D 2

THUS

THUS, Sir, I have given you, with Candour, what occurs to me, at present, in relation to the Complaints of our Woollen Manufacturors ; and I hope you of the *Legislature*, will be as zealous in their Redress, as the national Interest requires they should. I hope, too, it will be considered, that we can never be *too early* in Measures for depriving Foreigners of that, without which, they can never hurt us in our favourite Commerce : And I wish likewise, it may be remembered, that any *Delay* given to a Matter of this Nature, is so many Steps taken in *Favour* of our foreign Rivals, •

I WISH you Unanimity in all your Deliberations ; but particularly when you are to have the State

(25)

State of our *Woollen Manufactures*
under your Consideration, it being
a Matter of the utmost Consequence
to *England*. I am, &c.

Norwich, Feb. 10.

1733-4.

F I N . I S.

